

# Amnesty Proclamation

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DAY, MARCH 11, 1863.

## IMPORTANT TO DESERTERS

*N.Y. Times*  
A PROCLAMATION BY THE PRESIDENT.

**An Amnesty to Deserters who will Return Before the 1st of April.**

**A Warning to Those who Promote Desertions.**

WASHINGTON, Tuesday, March 10.

The *Chronicle* of to-morrow will contain the following:

By the President of the United States:

### A PROCLAMATION

RESPECTING SOLDIERS ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, March 10, 1863.

In pursuance of the twenty-sixth section of the act of Congress, entitled an act for enrolling and calling out the National forces, and for other purposes, approved on the third of March in the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, I ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States do hereby order and command that all soldiers enlisted or drafted into the service of the United States, now absent from their regiments without leave, shall forthwith return to their respective regiments and I do hereby declare and proclaim that all soldiers now absent from their respective regiments without leave who shall on or before the first day of April, 1863, report themselves at any rendezvous designated by the General Orders of the War Department, No. 68, hereto annexed, may be restored to their respective regiments without punishment except the forfeiture of pay and allowances during their absence, and all who do not return within the time above specified, shall be arrested as deserters, and punished as the law provides:

And whereas, evil disposed and disloyal persons, at sundry places, have enticed and procured soldiers to desert and absent themselves from their regiments, thereby weakening the strength of the armies and prolonging the war, giving aid and comfort to the enemy, and cruelly exposing the gallant and faithful soldiers remaining in the ranks to increased hardships and dangers:

I do, therefore, call upon all patriotic and faithful citizens to oppose and resist the aforementioned dangerous and treasonable crimes, and aid in restoring to their regiments all soldiers absent without leave, and to assist in the execution of the act of Congress for "enrolling and calling out the national forces and for other purposes," and to support the proper authorities in the prosecution and punishment of offenders against said act and aid in suppressing the insurrection and the rebellion.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand.

Done at the City of Washington, this 10th day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States eighty-seventh.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President.

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

Many excellent suggestions are made for maintaining the efficiency of the army. We have heretofore expressed our views upon the repeal of the substitute law, and the bringing of exemptions into service. Every man within the present military age should be put into the service who is not more profitably employed out of it. Congress should act cautiously in extending that age, or in passing a sweeping conscription, and providing that those more useful to the material and political interests of the country, be exempt by a "detail." We reiterate against this proceeding as an infringement of the constitutional duty of the representative branch to "raise armies," which we understand to mean armies for the field; and as placing an arbitrary power in the hands of creatures of the Executive liable to the most corrupting and dangerous abuse.



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## Monthly Record of Current Events.

### UNITED STATES.

THE Thirty-eighth Congress of the United States convened on Monday, December 7. In the Senate some opposition was made to the admission of Messrs. Willey and Van Winkle, sent from West Virginia; but on a test vote, 36 ayes to 5 nays, their claim was recognized, and the oath of office administered to them.—In the House a brief discussion arose as to the right of some members whose names were omitted by Mr. Etheridge, the Clerk of the late Congress, in calling the roll, on the ground of some alleged informality in the wording of their credentials. They were, however, admitted to seats, and the House proceeded to the election of Speaker. There were present 181 Representatives, 92 votes being necessary to a choice. Upon the first ballot Hon. Schuyler Colfax, of Indiana, Administration, received 101, and was elected. The votes of the Opposition were scattered, Mr. Cox, of Ohio, receiving 52, the highest number, and Mr. Stiles, of Pennsylvania, the lowest, being the solitary vote of the Hon. Benjamin Wood, of New York. The organization of the House was completed by the election of Mr. McPherson, of Pennsylvania, as Clerk, and Mr. Ordway, of New Hampshire, as Sergeant-at-Arms. These votes show that the Administration has in the House a clear majority of about 20 over the various shades of the Opposition.

The President's Message, which was sent in on the 9th, is brief and emphatic, leaving the general details of affairs to be set forth in the Reports of the Heads of the Departments. Our foreign relations are eminently satisfactory. The British Government, as was justly expected, have exercised their authority to prevent the departure of new hostile expeditions from their ports. The Emperor of France has, by a like proceeding, promptly vindicated the neutrality which he proclaimed at the beginning of the contest.—Foreigners have in some cases become naturalized merely to avoid the duties imposed by the laws of their own countries, and then returning, claim the protection of this Government. The President suggests that it will be advisable to fix a limit beyond which no citizen of the United States residing abroad can claim the interposition of his Government.—It is urged that the fact of having voted shall be made by law an estoppel against any plea of exemption from military service, or other civil obligation, on the ground of alienage.

The financial condition of the country is favorable. The entire nominal receipts of the Treasury were \$901,125,674, the disbursement \$895,796,630. Of the receipts \$69,059,642 came from customs, \$37,640,787 from direct tax, \$776,682,361 from loans, and the remainder from miscellaneous sources. But of these sums \$181,086,635, both in payments and receipts, was merely nominal, money having been borrowed to pay funded and temporary debt to this amount. It was merely a transfer of debt from one account to another. Deducting this sum from both sides, the actual receipts were \$720,039,039, and the actual expenditures \$714,709,995—leaving a balance of \$5,329,044.

Our navy now consists of 588 vessels, completed, or in course of completion; of these 75 are iron-clad or armored steamers. Our armored vessels are believed to exceed in force and number those of any

other power. They are reliable for harbor and coast defense; but others of greater strength and capacity will be required to maintain our rightful position on the ocean.

Of those who were slaves at the beginning of the rebellion 100,000 are in the service of the United States—half of them in the ranks. So far as tested they are as good soldiers as any.—In respect to the slaves and their future status, the message contains this emphatic paragraph:

The laws and proclamations [respecting slavery] were enacted and put forth for the purpose of aiding in the suppression of the rebellion. To give them their fullest effect there had to be a pledge for their maintenance. In my judgment they have aided, and will further aid, the cause for which they were intended. To abandon them now would be not only to relinquish a lever of power, but would also be a cruel and an astounding breach of faith. I may add at this point, that while I remain in my present position I shall not attempt to retract or modify the emancipation proclamation; nor shall I return to slavery any person who is free by the terms of that proclamation, or by any of the acts of Congress.

The most important portion of the Message is the Proclamation of Amnesty, the leading paragraphs of which we give textually. After reciting that the Constitution empowers the President to grant reprieves and pardons; that a rebellion has long existed, and that laws have been passed and proclamations issued confiscating property and liberating slaves; and that now many persons engaged in the rebellion are desirous of returning to their allegiance, the Proclamation proceeds:

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do proclaim, declare, and make known to all persons who have, directly or by implication, participated in the existing rebellion, except as hereinafter excepted, that a full pardon is hereby granted to them and each of them, with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves, and in property cases where rights of third parties shall have intervened, and upon the condition that every such person shall take and subscribe an oath, and thenceforward keep and maintain said oath inviolate; and which oath shall be registered for permanent preservation, and shall be of the tenor and effect following, to wit:

"I do solemnly swear, in presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the union of the States thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion with reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress, or by decision of the Supreme Court; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all proclamations of the President made during the existing rebellion having reference to slaves, so long and so far as not modified or declared void by decision of the Supreme Court. So help me God."

The persons excepted from the benefits of the foregoing provisions are all who are, or shall have been, civil or diplomatic officers or agents of the so-called Confederate Government; all who have left judicial stations under the United States to aid the rebellion; all who are, or shall have been, military or naval officers of said so-called Confederate Government above the rank of colonel in the army or of lieutenant in the navy; all who left seats in the United States Congress to aid the rebellion; all who resigned commissions in the army or navy of the United States, and afterward aided the rebellion; and all who have engaged in any way in treating colored persons, or white persons in charge of such, otherwise than lawfully as prisoners of war, and which persons may have been found in the United States service as soldiers, seamen, or in any other capacity.

And I do further proclaim, declare, and make known, that whenever, in any of the States of Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina, a number of persons, not less than one-tenth in number of the votes cast in such State at the Presidential election of the year of

our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty, each having taken the oath aforesaid and not having since violated it, and being a qualified voter by the election law of the State existing immediately before the so-called act of secession, and excluding all others, shall re-establish a State Government which shall be republican, and in no wise contravening said oath, such shall be recognized as the true Government of the State, and the State shall receive thereunder the benefits of the constitutional provision which declares that "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of Government, and shall protect each of them against invasion; and, on application of the Legislature or the Executive (when the Legislature can not be convened), against domestic violence."

The Proclamation goes on to say that any provision which may be adopted by any State Government in relation to the freed people, which shall recognize their permanent freedom, and yet make proper arrangements for their present condition, will not be objected to by the Executive; that in constructing loyal State Governments, the former codes of laws should be changed as little as possible; that the Proclamation so far as relates to State Governments has no reference to States where loyal governments have been maintained; and that while it presents the best mode that the President can now suggest, it is not to be understood that no other possible mode would be acceptable.

Our record closing upon the 9th of December, we are compelled to defer to the next number a resumé of the state of the nation as embodied in the official reports of the Heads of the Departments.

The Army of the Potomac has made another brief advance across the Rappahannock and has returned again to its old position on the north bank of that river. If the object of this movement was to occupy the army of Lee so as to prevent further reinforcements from being sent to the vital points in Tennessee it was successful; if the design was to give a decisive battle in Virginia or to advance upon Richmond, it was a failure. The general movement was commenced on the 7th of November, when two corps under Generals Sedgwick and French crossed the Rappahannock at different points in the neighborhood of Fredericksburg. Near Rappahannock Station, upon the north side of the river Sedgwick fell apparently by surprise upon a detachment of the enemy strongly posted; after a short but sharp action these were driven from their intrenchments, and being unable to cross the river were captured. Besides the killed and wounded, about 2000 prisoners were taken, our loss in killed and wounded being about 300. General French at the same time fell upon a body of the enemy at Kelley's Ford, a little lower down, and routed them, making prisoners of about 400, himself losing in the action about 70 killed and wounded. The main body of the enemy then fell across the Rapidan, and a series of skirmishes between outposts and bodies of cavalry ensued during the next fortnight. At length between the 25th and the 27th the army severing its communications with Washington crossed the Rapidan in three columns, without very serious opposition, the enemy after some skirmishing falling back to positions which they had strongly fortified in "the Wilderness" in the neighborhood of Chancellorsville where Hooker's battle had been fought. No official details of the proceedings of the ensuing six days have been published, and we have only the partial reports of newspaper correspondents. On the 27th a sharp engagement took place at Locust Grove between the corps of French, Warren, and Sedgwick, and the enemy, who were repulsed and fell back to their intrenchments on Mine Creek. The 28th and

the 29th were passed in manœuvring for the purpose of ascertaining the position of the enemy, and gaining, if possible, advantageous positions for an assault upon his lines. At a council of war on the night of the 29th it was determined to make the assault the next day. It was accordingly commenced on our right and centre, and at those points bid fair to be successful, when it was announced from headquarters that the main attack upon the left would not be made, and our troops already engaged were withdrawn, and on the 2d of December our army recrossed the Rapidan. The following is the substance of the "Press dispatches," which having been submitted to Government censorship, may be presumed to be essentially correct: The army crossed on the 26th, and concentrated next day on Mine Run, the enemy being strongly intrenched on the opposite side, in a position too strong to be carried by assault. The nature of the country was such as to prevent extended operations for turning the works, arising especially from the impossibility of keeping up the supplies for our army at such a distance from its dépôts. During and after the partial assault of the 2d General Meade visited the entire line, noting the enemy's strong positions, batteries, and earthworks, and after consultation with his officers deemed it advisable to withdraw to the north side of the Rapidan. This was accomplished without loss of men or munitions. The entire casualties of this expedition, in killed, wounded, and missing, are estimated at about 1000. The loss of the enemy is unknown. Present appearances indicate that the autumn campaign of the Army of the Potomac is concluded, and that it will go into winter-quarters.

During the same week in which this unsuccessful expedition across the Rapidan was carried on, our armies in Tennessee were achieving a most brilliant success. The great army of Grant at and about Chattanooga was in great peril. Its communications were so long and difficult that supplies were scanty and precarious. The brilliant operations of October 27, noted in our last Record, had partially removed this difficulty; but the enemy, contrary to the reports of the time, still held the commanding position of Lookout Mountain. Burnside also, near Knoxville, was for the time completely isolated, and liable to be overwhelmed by a strong advance. Bragg dispatched a heavy body, under Longstreet, to cut off Burnside. On the 14th of November, Longstreet crossed the Tennessee and found Burnside at Lenoir, a few miles southwest of Knoxville. Burnside, opposed by superior forces, fell slowly back, repelling every assault of the enemy, and finally reached Knoxville on the 17th, where he was for a while closely besieged by Longstreet. Here, as at Chattanooga, the question was mainly one of supplies, for Knoxville could be held as long as provisions could be obtained. The fighting was therefore mainly for the purpose of gaining or holding the lines of communication. This went on for something more than two weeks, when news came to Longstreet from Chattanooga which compelled him to raise the siege of Knoxville, and to retreat if he wished to avoid capture himself. Bragg had been routed at Chattanooga by Grant, and Sherman, who had been sent to succor Burnside, had reached Knoxville, his cavalry arriving on the 3d of December, and the main body of reinforcements within a day or two after. Our latest intelligence, coming through Confederate channels, says that Longstreet is retreating to Virginia, followed up by our troops, with what result we are still to learn.



# LINCOLN LORE

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## THE AMNESTY OATH OF DECEMBER 8, 1863

The Amnesty Oath of December 8, 1863, was the open door to pardoned belligerents hostile to the Union and the way of return without censure for deserters who had fled from the Union Army.

An increasing number of pardons signed by Abraham Lincoln are appearing on the autograph market. Most of these endorsements are contingent on the petitioner taking the Amnesty Oath of December 8, 1863. The Lincoln National Life Foundation has just acquired one which is typical of those generally offered for sale. It follows:

"Let him be released on taking the amnesty oath of December 8, 1863.

"A. Lincoln.  
"April 10, 1865."

This endorsement was signed, it will be observed, on April 10, four days before Lincoln's assassination and the day after he was notified of General Lee's surrender. It might be called a jubilant signature.

It should be remembered that the Amnesty Proclamation was issued but eight days after the delivery of the Gettysburg Address. There may have been several factors combined along with the sentiment of Gettysburg which prompted the famous Amnesty Proclamation.

Over forty years ago, Col. Albert D. Shaw wrote an interesting story about a "skedaddler" who had run off to Canada after deserting his regiment. He had repented his offense and wanted to be reinstated in the army and so wrote to Hon. Addison H. Laffin, expressing this desire. The letter was shown to Mr. Lincoln who, it is said, made the following comment:

"When a poor fellow has made a mistake, by all means give him a chance to live it down. There is good stuff in that man, for no coward would make such a plea."

After these remarks, according to Mr. Laffin, Lincoln picked up a card which lay upon his desk, wrote the following memorandum, and handed it to Mr. Laffin.

"Private ..... is herewith allowed to come to me, wherever he may be, and on his promising to be a good soldier and serve out his time faithfully, I will pardon him.

"A. Lincoln."

The card was sent to the deserter and in a short time

the soldier appeared before the President in company with Mr. Laffin. In the conversation between the deserter and the President, Laffin quotes the President as asking this question, "Are there many more over there (Canada) who would come back if they knew they would be pardoned?" To this question, the deserter replied, "Yes—lots." Upon this remark Lincoln said, "Then I will give them all a chance." Laffin thought that this contact was partially responsible for the Amnesty Proclamation of 1863.

Congress had authorized the President by proclamation, "to extend to persons who may have participated in the existing rebellion in any State or part thereof, pardon and amnesty." On December 8, 1863, he issued the Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction. It was one of the most important documents of his administration and looked forward to forgiveness and peace.

It promised "to all persons who have, directly or by implication, participated in the existing rebellion, except as hereinafter excepted, that a full pardon is hereby granted to them and to each of them with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves . . . and upon condition that every such person shall subscribe an oath and thence forward keep and maintain said oath in violate."

Thus the Amnesty Oath of December 8, 1863, became the very foundation of reconstruction and the invitation for disloyal subjects, both North and South, to swear new allegiance to the Union. It was the very soul of the Proclamation and its importance is emphasized by setting it apart in the center of this bulletin in bold face type.

The concluding paragraph in the proclamation reveals how much Lincoln depended on this plan to restore the national authority.

"This proclamation is intended to present the people of the States wherein the national authority has been suspended, and loyal State governments have been subverted, a mode in and by which the national authority and loyal State governments may be reestablished within said States, or in any of them; and while the mode presented is the best the executive can suggest, with his present impressions, it must not be understood that no other possible mode would be acceptable."

